



February 11, 2009

Testimony in favor of House Bill HB6361 AAC The Establishment of a Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners Program
Public Health Committee

Senator Harris and Representative Ritter
Members of the Public Health Committee

Honorable Chairs and Members of the Public Health Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on HB6361. My name is Lynn Price. I am a family nurse practitioner, a nursing professor, and the state representative to the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners. I am also a member of the Government Relations Committee of the Connecticut APRN Society. In each of these roles, I offer strong recommendation of the committee's support for this bill.

This bill represents a vital step forward in better responding to victims of sexual assault. One major improvement is that response would actually be available in all settings, which is not now the case. It is not good policy for a victim's care to depend on circumstance, and what setting she or he presents to, as is the case now - this bill corrects the current inability to provide ready response for all victims.

A second major improvement is that response would be consistent, and comprised of expert responders. Many health care providers in settings without Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners available at the time a victim presents make good faith, but erroneous efforts to respond. The result is likely poor patient care, and definite contamination of evidence that could otherwise be used to preserve and protect the victim's legal remedies.

This bill puts forth a program that is based on a model that we know works, that of Massachusetts. In the eleven years that the Massachusetts program has been in existence, we have clear evidence that successful prosecutions are virtually ensured because of the presence of a sexual assault forensic examiner on the case. There is also strong evidence that actual prosecution is avoided by a high rate of guilty pleas from alleged perpetrators - a significant cost savings to taxpayers. These outcomes speak firmly to the importance of good patient care, appropriate evidence collection, and a sturdy chain of evidence - all of which is only possible because of the program such as that considered in this bill.

We all realize that you must weigh costs before recommending a program. The costs here are extremely modest, and largely offset by savings in other areas. And the benefits to individual victims, to their families, and to our communities are huge. Please support HB6361.

Thank you.